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U.S. Officials Said to Have Aided Private Suppliers of Contra Units

By STEPHEN ENGELBERG

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 10 — Government officials said today that White House and Pentagon officials had continued to assist private efforts to supply the Nicaraguan rebels.

They did not directly link Reagan Administration officials to the flight of a cargo plane downed on Sunday over Nicaragua. But they said senior officials had helped those who set up a supply network for the rebels more than two years ago, when Congress cut off aid.

The Administration has repeatedly denied that any Government agency was connected to the plane. Secretary of State George P. Shultz reiterated that statement today in Iceland, where he was accompanying President Reagan.

Hundreds of Missions

One Administration official said hundreds of missions had been flown in the last two years at a cost of many millions of dollars raised from private donors and friendly foreign governments. "Certainly this has had the knowledge of people in the Government," he said. "I'm sure they don't feel they have command and control of it. Oversight would be a good word for it."

This official said the Administration had tried to stay within the letter, if not the spirit, of the Congressional ban on aiding the rebels. He said, however, that White House and Pentagon officials had been instrumental in advising the various private efforts to arm the contras, as the Nicaraguan rebels are known.

In the last year, an organization headed by John K. Singlaub, a retired United States Army general, has been the focus of attention from news organizations about the supplies to the contras. He has denied any involvement in the flight of the downed plane.

One senior official said the publicity in recent years about General Singlaub's activities was welcomed by some Administration officials because it diverted attention from the operations being guided by the White House.

Senator John F. Kerry, Democrat of Massachusetts and a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, said today that he believed the panel should question Lieut. Col. Oliver North, a member of the National Security Coun-

cil staff who was reported more than a year ago to have been providing military advice to the Nicaraguan rebels. The committee met in closed session for a briefing on the downed plane from C.I.A. officials.

Senator Kerry said he had evidence there had been violations of the Neutrality Act and export law by "people acting with the open encouragement of the Reagan Administration."

"And I have some evidence there are some people within the reaches of the Administration, or in other words the N.S.C., or people who work in connection with them, who have violated those laws," he added.

Yesterday, Senator Dave Durenberger, a Minnesota Republican who is chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, received a briefing from William J. Casey, Director of Central Intelligence. "There's no question that some private resupply has been taking care of the contras," the senator said. "Whether Bill Casey encouraged them, I don't know. Whether Ollie North encouraged them, whether Ronald Reagan encouraged them, I don't know."

Today, Mr. Durenberger said: "The President, someone on the N.S.C. surely has some knowledge. I know the White House knows and is not telling the world."

Last year, The New York Times reported that Colonel North was providing direct military advice to the rebels as well as help in raising money from private sources. After that disclosure, three House committees announced they would investigate the issue. Each received denials from Robert C. McFarlane, who was then President Reagan's national security adviser. The inquiries were all concluded without result.

"I deny it," Elliott Abrams, the Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, said when asked about the assertion that the Administration had remained involved in assisting the rebels. "The intelligence committees have kept looking at it and looking at it. They have never found anything. There's a reason for that. It's because this is not factual."

Meanwhile, one Congressional



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Captured American said supply planes for Nicaraguan rebels flew from Ilopango and Aguacate.

source familiar with activities of the contras, as the Nicaraguan rebels are known, said he gave credence to an account in today's issue of The San Francisco Examiner that said an aide to Vice President Bush had been involved in directing the supply missions.

Eugene Hasenfus, the surviving crewman of the plane that was downed, said Thursday at a press conference in Nicaragua that two C.I.A. employees, one of whom was named Max Gomez, worked on logistics and flight plans. The Congressional source said Mr. Gomez had served in Vietnam at the

same time as Donald P. Gregg, a former C.I.A. official who is the national security adviser to Vice President Bush.

Marlin Fitzwater, a spokesman for Vice President Bush, emphatically denied the assertion. "Neither the Vice President nor anyone on his staff is directing or coordinating an operation in Central America," Mr. Fitzwater said.

The C.I.A. said that neither Mr. Gomez nor anyone else mentioned by Mr. Hasenfus was a C.I.A. employee, either directly or by contract.

A log book for the plane shot down over Nicaragua showed it had flown from the Ilopango air base in El Salvador, according to Nicaraguan authorities. A log book for another plane, also found in the wreckage, showed a flight from the Aguacate base in Honduras. Mr. Hasenfus said the plane he was on had flown out of the Ilopango base.